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CIA Seeking Early Return To 'Bond' Days

After an all-too-brief period of hunkering down, when exposure of its illegal activities shocked the nation, the CIA is once more on the offensive. It is trying to persuade Congress that it should be allowed to invade the FBI's turf and conduct domestic operations—one of the things that got the spooks in trouble in the first place.

What's more, the CIA is demanding that it be exempted from most provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, thus assuring that future misbehavior would be harder to detect. Clearly, the old-boy network at the CIA pines for the "rogue elephant" days when it could literally get away with murder, and relishes the prospect of an early return to that halcyon James Bond era.

The Reagan administration, like others before it, tried to bring the spy agency under control, and soon felt the power of the CIA's elite. The rank outsider appointed to head covert operations, Max Hugel, was soon forced out after mysteriously orchestrated charges of questionable business dealings. A similar "destabilizing" campaign has been directed at Director William J. Casey, who is enough of a bureaucratic infighter to have survived so far.

A top-secret analysis, originally prepared for the new administration's CIA transition team, is being restudied now at the White House. It lays the problem out bluntly.

The report warned that it was inevitable President Reagan and his advisers would be "told repeatedly by virtually everyone in policy positions at the agency that the CIA is a highly professional, nonpolitical agency that produces 'objective' intelligence." The analysis comments witheringly: "Those assertions are arrant nonsense."

Claiming strict objectivity and piously wrapping themselves in the flag are merely the automatic defensive "cover" adopted by the CIA elite to protect their weak flank: the lack of Civil Service job security. The CIA director can fire anyone he chooses, and this has always spooked the old-boy network.

"For that reason," the analysis explains, "the CIA self-image—and its projection to any incoming director—is part of an elaborate self-defense mechanism developed over the years as an artificial protective device in lieu of the normal protections of career Civil Service status.

"In part out of a mutual drive for individual and corporate self-preservation, the CIA has become an elitist organization which engenders incredible loyalty among its staff and retired personnel . . . . The bureaucracy of the Central Intelligence Agency—for self-preservation—must create and constantly reinforce its elitist image and status as 'untouchable' to insure self-perpetuation."

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